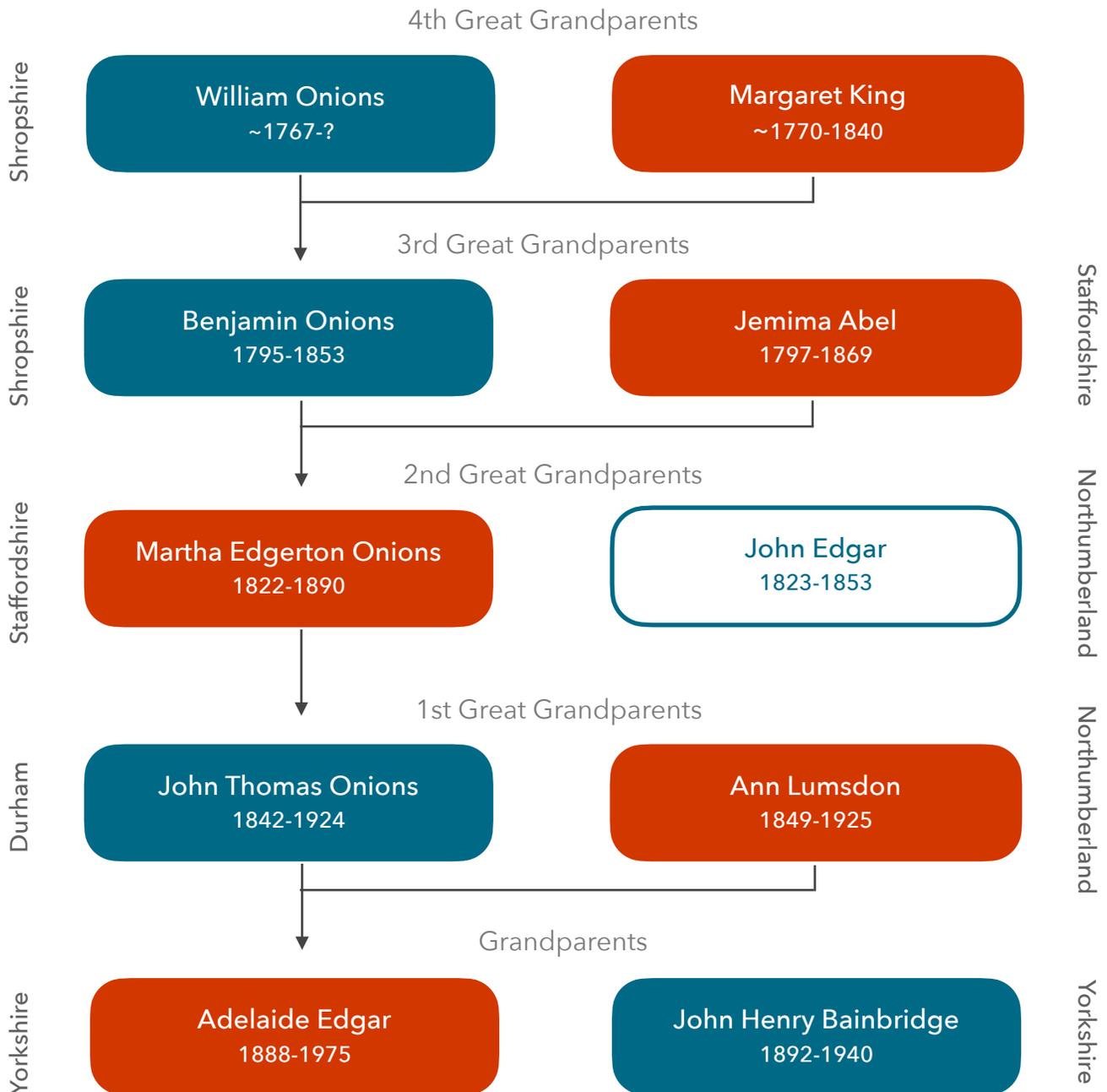


# Onions, not Edgar!

Our Family from the West Midlands



# Onions Family Line



# Origin of Onions

William, Benjamin, Martha & John Thomas

**B**enjamin Onions was born 1795 on the cusp of the Georgian and Regency Eras in the parish of Dawley Magna, Shropshire, to parents William Onions & Margaret King, and baptized at Holy Trinity Church.



Holy Trinity Church, Dawley Magna, Shropshire, c1800

The industrial revolution had thrust Shropshire forward as a centre for the iron industry. Dawley Magna's ironworks used the locally mined ironstone and coal, employed hundreds of men, and produced cast iron for use in the burgeoning manufactories of the Black Country, including the construction of the first iron bridge at Iron Bridge, just a few miles away.

Benjamin, a cast iron tinner, moved 25 miles to West Bromwich for employment at one of a dozen iron works, producing tin ware – tinned cast iron hollow-wares such as cooking pots, kettles, and skillets.

**J**emima Abel from Oldbury, Staffordshire, born 1797 was the fourth of five children raised by William Abel & Martha Tonks, and baptized in Christ Church, Oldbury.

Her father, William, was a Tinner, like her future husband, in the ironworks in neighbouring West Bromwich. He had migrated from the village of Bredon, Worcestershire, at the outset of the industrial revolution. Martha, her mother, came from a family of nailers, producing hand-wrought nails. The trade reached its greatest prosperity in the late 18th century, West Bromwich being one of the principal nail-manufacturing parishes in the Black Country.

Benjamin & Jemima grew up in turbulent times. World affairs were impacting the local industries. Britain's ongoing political posturing with the newly independent USA resulted in blockades of French and allied ports, and ultimately the War of 1812, which reduced international demand for Black Country products. Furthermore automation of traditional skills such as the the invention of machine cut nails, reduced the need for a skilled workforce.

Scroll forward to 1819 and the country was suffering from a Post-Napoleonic depression. Innovation driven by the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) had been followed by chronic economic depression and rising unemployment. Exacerbated by the Corn Laws, which imposed tariffs on foreign grain raised prices, and harvest failures in England, the cost of bread was high and food prices were rising. As a result the urban populations were organizing mass rallies to demand reforms.

In this dire economic and social climate, Benjamin and Jemima, married at St John the Baptist's Parish Church, Halesowen, 21 March 1819, just like her parents had 34 years earlier. Jemima & Benjamin settled in West Bromwich and had four children between 1820-1826, three of whom survived childhood.



St John the Baptist's Parish Church, Halesowen,  
Staffordshire, circa 2018

The urban experience in the midst of the industrial revolution would not have been enjoyable as portrayed by this contemporary description of the Black Country landscape and working conditions.

*... the houses, for the most part, are not arranged in continuous streets, but are interspaced with blazing furnaces, heaps of burning coal in process of coking, piles of ironstone calcining, forges, pit-banks, and engine chimneys; the country being besides intersected with canals, crossing each other at various levels, and small remaining patches of the surface soil occupied with fields of grass or corn, intermingled with heaps of the refuse of mines or the slag from the blast furnaces. Sometimes the road passes between mounds of refuse from the pits, like a deep cutting on a railway; at others it runs like a causeway, raised some feet above the field on either side, which have subsided by the excavation of minerals beneath...*

The family's relocation to Gateshead in late 1826 could have been triggered by the unhealthy environment, social instability, or the opportunity of better employment with the burgeoning age of steam.

Setting out on a 200 mile journey with a pregnant wife, and young family aged 2-6 years, demonstrates either the desperation of their situation, or the confidence with which they could relocate from the Black Country to Tyneside. Transport options were limited to road or canal, as the first public railways such as the Stockton and Darlington, which opened in 1825, only operated a local service. Carrying all their possessions, the family most likely walked the 200 mile journey over the course of a month.

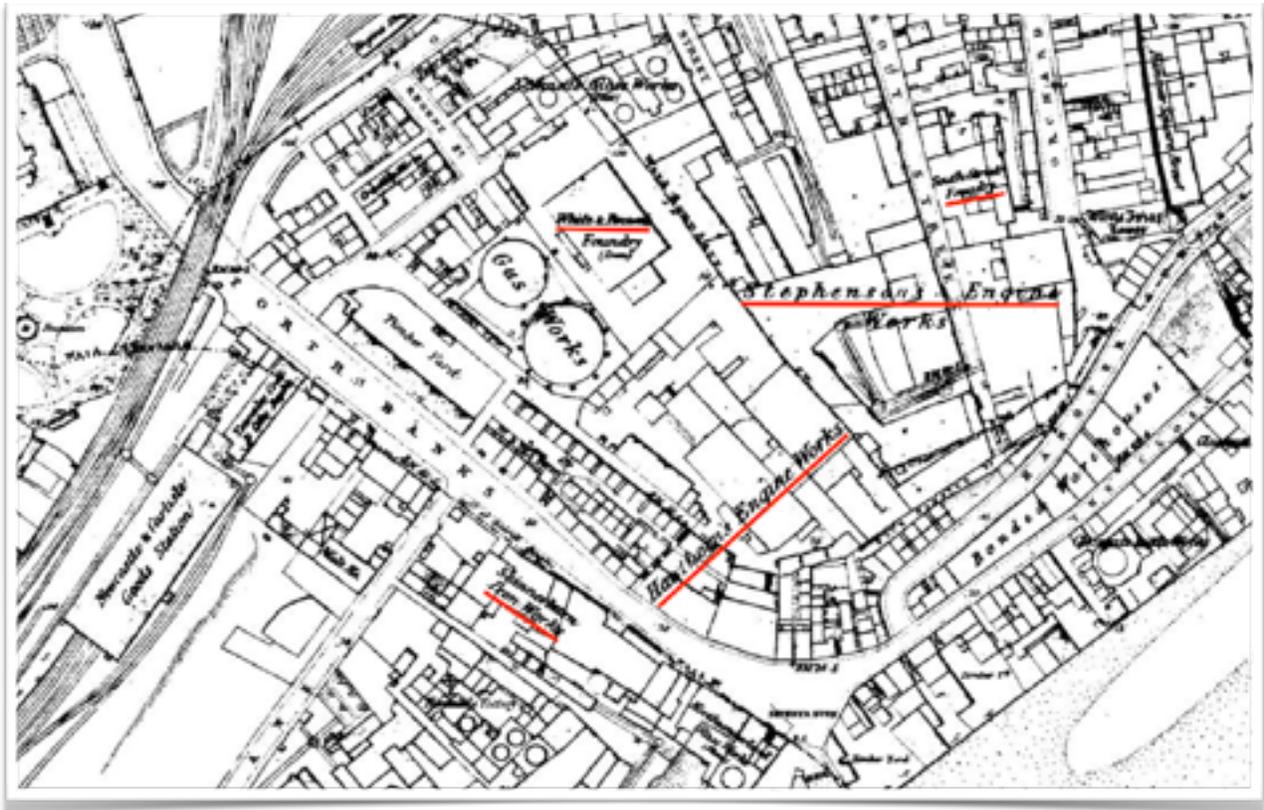
When the Onions family eventually arrived in Gateshead, they were greeted by the Georgian squalor of Barns Close, Pollock Street, the center of the city, and their home for their first decade in Tyneside.



Barn Close, Pollock Street, Gateshead. Pollock Street was demolished in 1933. Photo c1931

Rebecca, the child Jemima carried on the road from West Bromwich, was born in Gateshead and baptised on Christmas Day 1826. Four more children followed over the next decade, nine in total, of which seven survived childhood.

After almost 25 years in Gateshead, the family relocated over the river Tyne to Forth Banks, Newcastle-upon Tyne, where Benjamin continued work as a tinner and mounter at one of the half dozen Iron Works or Engine Works in the waterfront neighbourhood. This was an industrial landscape including George Stephenson's Engine Works where they built the first steam locomotive, the Rocket.



Map circa 1850 of Forth Banks, Newcastle upon Tyne, underlining Skinnertown Iron Works, White & Brown Iron Foundry, Hawthorn's Engine Works, Stephenson's Engine Works, & South Street Foundry. Additional businesses include: Railway Good Station, Timber Yards, Gas Works, Potteries, Glass Works, Bottle Works, & Bonded Warehouses, all interspersed with housing.

Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Newcastle upon Tyne</i>									
Registrar's District <i>Saint Nicholas</i>									
1853 . DEATHS in the District of <i>Saint Nicholas</i> in the County of <i>Newcastle upon Tyne</i>									
No.	What Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
<i>206</i>	<i>Whitesmith</i>	<i>Benjamin Onions</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>Whitesmith</i>	<i>Diarrhoea 4 or 5 weeks Asiatic Cholera 14 or 15 hours Certified</i>	<i>Benjamin Onions Present at death Close St Nicholas Newcastle upon Tyne</i>	<i>Nineteenth September 1853</i>	<i>Benjamin Baker Registrar</i>

Transcription: Eighteenth September 1853, Close St Nicholas | Benjamin Onions | Male | 59 years | Whitesmith | Diarrhea 4 or 5 weeks, Asiatic Cholera 14 or 15 hours, Certified | Benjamin Onions present at the Death, Close St Nicholas, Newcastle upon Tyne | Registered Nineteenth September 1853 | Benjamin Baker, Registrar

Benjamin Onions died, 19 September 1853, in the midst of England's worst cholera outbreak in Newcastle upon Tyne, shortly after the government officially announced that a cholera epidemic was claiming victims in London and in other parts of the country.

Transmission of cholera is usually through contaminated food or water caused by poor sanitation. Today, most cholera cases in developed countries are a result of transmission by food, while in the developing world it is more often water. The rapid spread of the 1853 epidemic was caused by contaminated water.

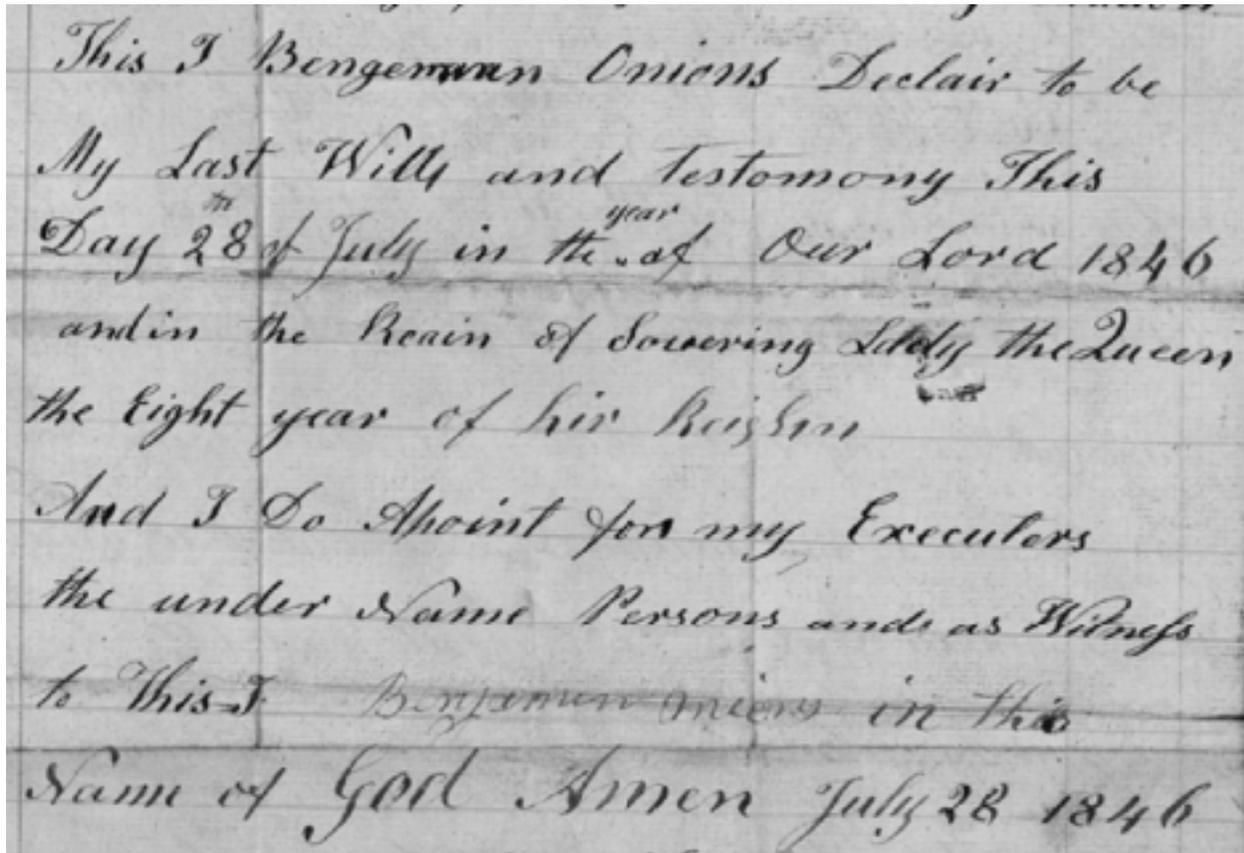
The water company, supplying both Newcastle and Gateshead, in order to meet the demands from a growing city, mixed unfiltered water from the River Tyne with its clean water source, leading to a supply polluted with particles from the collieries, iron foundries, and effluent from villages upstream. As a result, the disease spread to an extent almost unprecedented in this country. In nine weeks there were 1,533 deaths, 1001 of which concentrated from 13–23 September.

*The lowest streets in Newcastle and Gateshead are about five feet above high-water mark; and only a few streets are situated at this level, for the banks rise very abruptly, at a little distance from the river, on both sides. A great portion of each town is elevated nearly 200 feet above the river, and some parts are nearly 300 feet high; yet the Water Company supplies all these districts, and all were severely visited by the cholera, which on this occasion spared no class of the community. In the districts which are most crowded, the mortality was greatest, the deaths being much more numerous, in the parishes which contained a great number of tenements consisting of a single room, than in those which consisted chiefly of houses occupied by one family. This, however, is quite in accordance with the principles which I am throughout endeavoring to explain. A great deal of stress is laid, very properly, by the Commissioners who have reported respecting this outbreak, on the ill-arranged buildings, the defective drainage, and want of privy accommodation, in Newcastle; but it must be remembered that all these evils existed in 1849, when Newcastle escaped with less cholera than most towns...*

*On the Mode of Communication of Cholera by John Snow, M.D.*

In consequence of a great public outcry, who naturally connected the great fatalities from cholera with the turbidity and offensive smell of the drinking water, the Water Company ceased to draw water from the River Tyne on the 15 September; and although the Tyne water was not entirely out of the pipes for a day or two, the deaths, which had been rapidly increasing, began to diminish on the 17th, and were reduced considerably by the 20th.

Unusual for a working class family, Benjamin had drawn up a last will and testament. In the snippet below you will notice Benjamin's name written by his own hand.



This I Benjamin Onions Declair to be  
My Last Willy and Testomony This  
Day 28<sup>th</sup> of July in the <sup>year</sup> of Our Lord 1846  
and in the Reain of Sovereign Lady the Queen  
the Eight year of hir Reig<sup>n</sup>  
And I Do Apoint for my Executors  
the under Name Persons and as Witsnes  
to this I Benjamin Onions in the  
Name of God Amen July 28 1846

Transcription: This I Benjamin Onions declare to be my last will and testimony this day 28th July in the year of our Lord 1846 and in the reign of sovereign lady the Queen the eighth year of her reign. and I do appoint for my executors the under name persons and as witness to this I, Benjamin Onions, in the name of God amen July 28 1846.

Unfortunately, 7 years later, at the time of Benjamin's death, both of the executors and witnesses to the will had died. The family had to wait a further 8 years to complete the probate process. 59 years of age may appear young but is quite impressive when considering his 40 year career in the iron foundries and living in the less than hygienic slums.

The widowed Jemima Onions lived out her final years in a multi-story tenement on Wellington Street opposite Gateshead Railway Station. After twelve months of paralysis Jemima passed away under the care of her daughter-in-law Ann, in September 1869, aged 72 years.

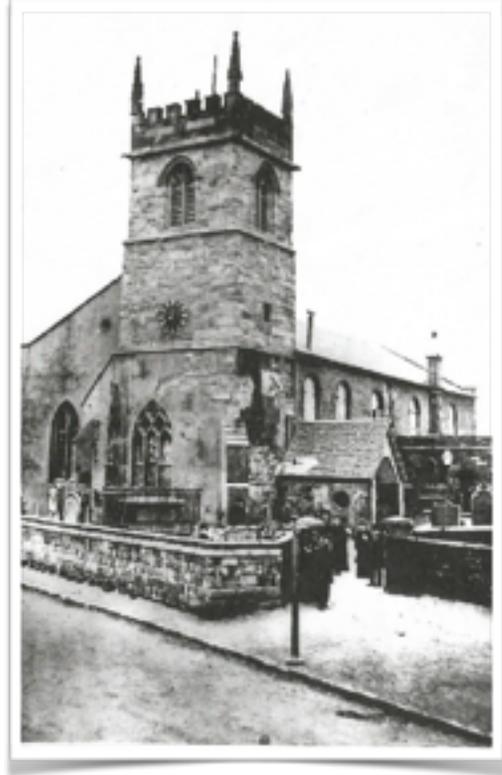
Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Gateshead</i>									
Registrar's District <i>Gateshead</i>									
8 <sup>th</sup> 1869. DEATHS in the District of <i>Gateshead</i> in the County of <i>Durham</i> .									
No.	Where and Where Dead.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature of Registrar.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
147	<i>Wellington Street</i>	<i>Jemima Onions</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>72 years a Tin Smith</i>	<i>Widow of Benjamin Onions, a Tin Smith</i>	<i>Paralysis 12 Months, Decay of Nature, Certified</i>	<i>Ann Onions present at the Death, 15 King Williams Street, Gateshead.</i>	<i>28<sup>th</sup> 1869</i>	<i>John Pattison Registrar</i>

Transcription: Twenty-seventh September 1869, Wellington Street | Jemima Onions | Female | 72 years | Widow of Benjamin Onions, a Tin Smith | Paralysis 12 months, Decay of Nature, Certified | Ann Onions present at the Death, 15 King Williams Street, Gateshead | Registered Twenty-eighth September 1869 | John Pattison, Registrar

**M**artha Edgerton Onions was born 1822 in Oak Green, West Bromwich, Staffordshire, and baptised 22 February 1822 at All Saints Church.

Martha's family relocated north to Gateshead when she was only 4 years old. However there are no records until she is next documented in the 1841 census, age 19 living with, or visiting, the Homes family of Kingswinford, Staffordshire.

The following year, Martha gives birth to her first son, John Thomas Onions, 21 September 1842, in her parents home on Pollock Street, Gateshead, County Durham. No father is listed on the birth certificate.



All Saints Church, West Bromwich,  
Staffordshire

No.	When Born	Name, if sep.	Sex	Name and Residence of Father	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Special Notes, if any other Registrar of Birth
577	Twentyfirst September 1842 Pollock Street	John Thomas	Boy		Martha Onions		Martha Onions Mother Pollock Street	Twentyfirst of October 1842	John Pattison Registrar	

Transcription: 1842 Births in the District of Gateshead in the County of Durham.  
Twentyfirst September 1842, Pollock Street | John Thomas | Boy | – Father – |  
Martha Onions, Mother, Pollock Street | Thirtyfirst October 1842 | John Pattison, Registrar

Illegitimacy in England was never common, the number of such births in the past usually being under 2%, however, by the 1840's the number of illegitimate children had slowly increased to 7% of births, when about a third of women were pregnant at marriage. With the introduction of civil registration of births in 1837, the birth certificates of illegitimate children usually show only the name of the mother, who is the informant, though the name of the father may sometimes appear.

Prior to 1834 unwed mothers had been legally entitled to receive support from the fathers of their children and government support from the Poor Laws. After 1834, with parliament's introduction of the Bastardy Laws, the avenues of attaining support were, for all practical purposes, cut off and the unwed mother could receive aid only by entering the workhouse. The advocates of the reforms asserted that the new laws would act as a deterrent to bastardy. They believed that a woman would be less likely to engage in pre-marital sexual relationships if she knew she would be ultimately solely responsible for the support of the resultant child. The situation facing unwed mothers, which had always been grim, now became desperate. It would take decades to reform and repeal the Bastardy Laws.

With no legal recourse against the father of the child, returning home to the support of her family was Martha's only option when she discovered her pregnancy. If Martha had entered the workhouse she would have likely been separated from her child.

Three years later Martha married John Edgar, 30 April 1845, in Gateshead, when they were both 22 years of age and their first child, Ann, arrived just over nine months later. Three more children were born

at two year intervals; Margery Hannah 1848, William 1850, & Benjamin 1852.

John Edgar was born in Allendale, Northumberland, a village 30 miles inland from Gateshead, famed for lead-mining and smelting since Roman times. As an engine wright he worked on the steam engines which were powering the factories of Tyneside. Tragically John died of cholera in 1853, age 30 years during an epidemic in Gateshead, the same epidemic which took his father-in-law, Benjamin Onions. Martha lost her husband and father within a fortnight; left widowed with five children between the ages of 1 and 11 years to support.

As a widow raising a family, Martha took employment as a shop keeper and hosted lodgers to supplement the family income. Martha's sixth and final child, James, was born illegitimate in 1857.

For at least the last 20 years of her life, Martha was dependent on her sons to support her, at various addresses around Gateshead, splitting tenements with other families and sharing their own room(s) with lodgers.



Slum tenements in Gateshead circa 1900

The Victorian tenements of Gateshead were up to five stories and lined narrow streets and alleys. Not until the Housing Act of 1930 was Gateshead City Council given much greater legal power to deal with slum housing, to acquire houses by compulsory purchase order and demolish them.

*"Sanitation was medieval, with industrial and human waste thrown into the street ... it was necessary to carry out a massive improvement programme, but this resulted in the loss of much of old Gateshead."*

*Simon Green, central services librarian for Gateshead, added: "When these pictures were taken, the town had some of the worst slum areas in the country. Some of the road names - Garden Street, Sun Street, and Rhubarb Terrace - make them sound quite pleasant, but they weren't."*

Martha's final residence was in Lamesley, south of Gateshead, living with her son William Edgar, a book keeper, and his family. The cause of death was listed as paralysis and asthma, age 68, 1 May 1890.

Superintendent Registrar's District <i>chester-le-strath</i>									
Registrar's Sub-District <i>Maraton</i>									
1890 DEATHS in the Sub-District of <i>Maraton</i> in the County of <i>Durham</i>									
No.	What and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant?	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
<i>154</i>	<i>First May 1890</i>	<i>Martha Edgar</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>Widow of John Edgar, an Engineer</i>	<i>Paralysis and Asthma, Certified by W H Davis L.S.A.S.</i>	<i>W. Edgar, son, In Attendance, Ellison Terrace, Lowell, Lamesley</i>	<i>First May 1890</i>	<i>Rob Turnbull Registrar</i>

Transcription: First May 1890, Ellison Terrace, Lowfell, Lamesley | Martha Edgar | Female | 68 years | Widow of John Edgar, an Engineer | Paralysis, Asthma, Certified by W H Davis LSAL | W Edgar, son, In Attendance, Ellison Terrace, Lowell, Lamesley | First May 1890 | Rob Turnbull, Registrar

**J**ohn Thomas Onions was born in Gateshead to an unwed mother, Martha, 21 September 1842. He was 2 years old when his mother married but was still listed as John Thomas Onions in his grandfather's last will and testament in 1845. Until the Legitimacy Act of 1926, illegitimate children had no legal kin except their mother, a decisive impediment in matters of property inheritance and poor law settlement, hence the reason why he was named in his grandfather's will.

By 1851, 8 year old John Thomas Edgar, having adopted the name of his step father, was living in Lambton Street, Gateshead, with three younger half-siblings, and attending school.



Lambton Street, Gateshead, was built in 1851. John Thomas Onions lived at No. 19, the last house on the left. Lambton street was demolished in 1938. Photograph circa 1937.

Tragedy struck the family during a cholera outbreak in September 1853 when John Thomas' step-father, John Edgar and his grandfather, Benjamin Onions, both died. John Thomas was only 11 and his four siblings were aged between 1 and 7 years.

By the age of 18, John Thomas was employed as an engine wright, repairing steam engines. He lived with his mother, Martha 38, who worked as a shop keeper, while raising four school-age children, and collected additional income from two lodgers.



Lambton Street, Gateshead, is conveniently located between the North Eastern Railway Works and Glass Works, OS 25" Map 1892-1913

In 1867, 24 year old John Thomas married a very pregnant 17 year old Ann Lumsdon in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Pregnant brides were not an uncommon sight in Victorian England. The young couple moved into a refreshment house in Neville Arcade, owned by Ann's father. Within three months, their first child, Jane Ann, was born.

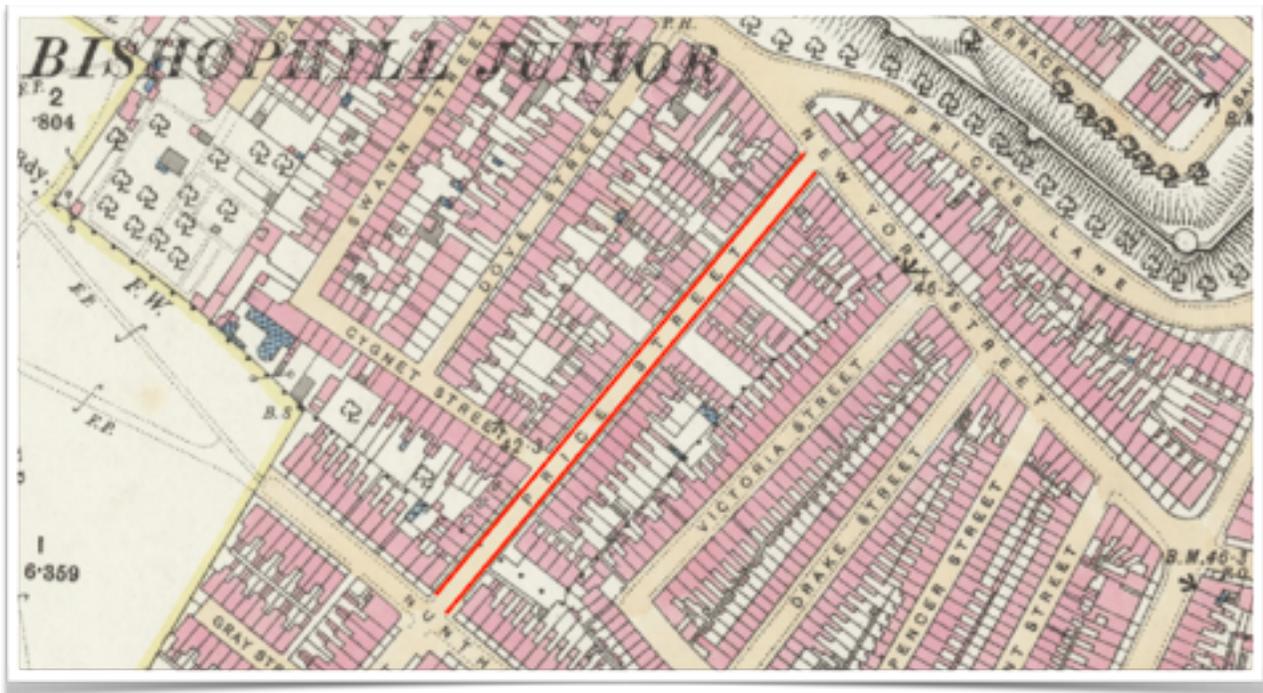
**A**nn Lumsdon was born 21 July 1849 in Alwick, Northumberland, the youngest of nine children, to Jane Summers & John Lumsdon. The family moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the mid-1850's, where John started an occupation of refreshment house keeper, licensed to sell ale and porter. The family lived in the eating house in Cloth Market and shortly thereafter acquired a second business in Neville Arcade.



A secondhand clothes seller at Newcastle Cloth Market reads as customers inspect her goods, mid 19th century. Photograph: NEMiPA- Collection of the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle

The newly married couple moved into Ann's father's refreshment house in Neville Arcade, with three young children: Jane Ann 4, John Thomas 2, & Elizabeth 7 months. John Lumsdon was battling through bankruptcy proceedings for the refreshment house and eating house, along with cancellation of his beverage license.

After thirteen years together, John Thomas & Ann moved their five children to York in 1880 where John Thomas was employed as a fitter on the railways. Their sixth child, William, was born in the Loriman's Buildings, in the parish of St Mary Bishopshill, the first of three tenements on Price Street occupied by the family.

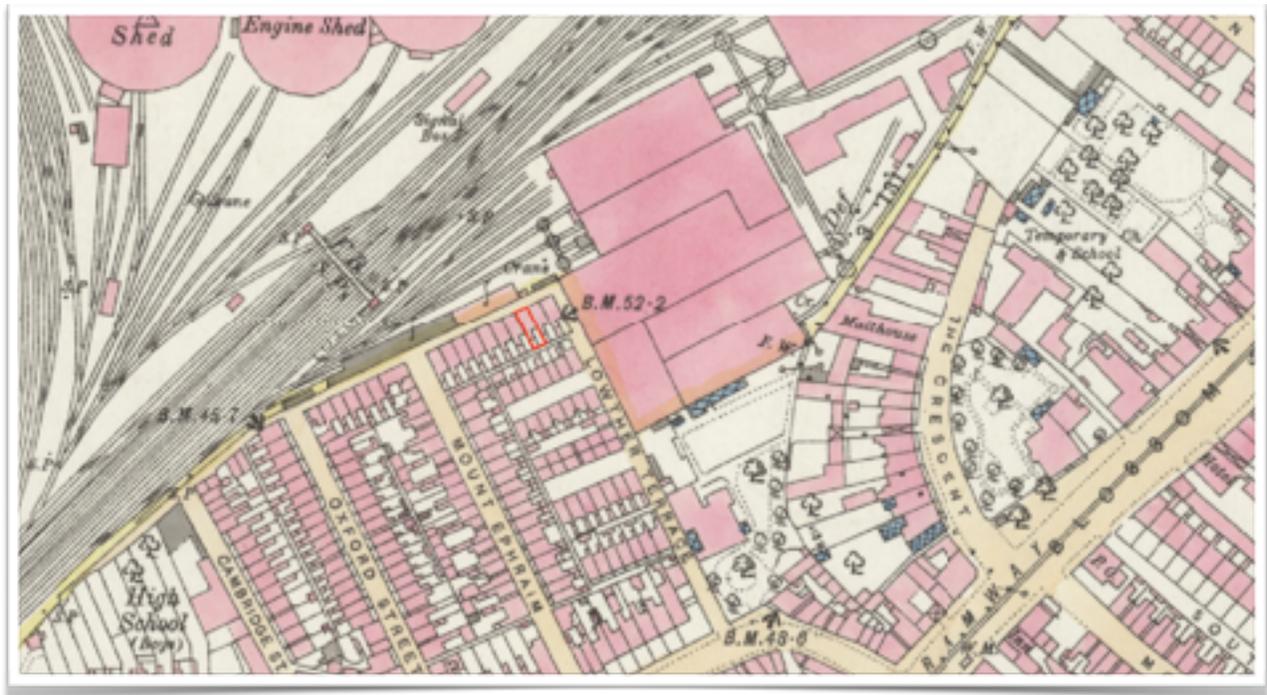


Price Street, between Nunthorpe Road & New York Street, St Mary Bishopshill, York, developed between 1870-1880, surviving until the late 20th century.  
Ordnance Survey 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

While the Irish immigrants had helped to swell the ranks of the really poor in York during the mid 19th century, the skilled clerks and

railway workers, such as John Thomas, formed the other main class of immigrants that became the backbone of a class of prosperous artisans.

They lived alongside the poorer classes in their own colonies near the railway works, out along the Holgate and Acomb Roads. Oxford and Cambridge Streets, Rosary Terrace, and Providence Place off the Holgate Road were heavily settled by railway workers.



3 Rosary Terrace (outlined in red), off Holgate Road, overlooked the railway tracks and engine sheds of York Railway Station, OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

No. 3 Rosary Terrace, a mid-Victorian terrace, was the family home to the Edgars, from the mid 1890's onwards. The home was convenient for John Thomas' employment as a Carriage Fitter and Engine Fitter for the Railways until his retirement around 1910. Once their children were out of school, Ann took up the role of Postmaster and the couple made their final move, two streets down, to Stafford Place (too small to appear on the map).

Their children went on to become grocers, nurses, drapers, carriage fitters, and sign writers, and their grandchildren became teachers, nurses, hairdressers, machinists, coach painters, electrical engineers, corn merchants, railway engineers, and aviators. The Edgar family dispersed across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

John Thomas lived until the ripe old age of 81, finally succumbing at home in 1924, with the cause of death listed as cerebral hemorrhage and heart failure.

70-11 Registration District YORK									
1924 DEATHS in the Sub-District of YORK WEST in the County of YORK C.B.									
No.	When and Where Died	Name of Deceased	Sex	Age	Date of Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Name, and Address of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
102	Second March 1924 6 Stafford Place Holgate Road (U.D.)	John Thomas Edgar	Male	81 Years	Railway Engine Fitter Retired	Cerebral hemorrhage & cardiac failure Certified by E. M. Walker -M.B.	Edgar William George Davis Son in Law Present at death 40 Lower Ebor Street York	Third March 1924	R. K. Chapman Registrar

Transcription: Second March 1924, 6 Stafford Place, Holgate Road | John Thomas Edgar | Male | 81 years | Railway Engine Fitter Retired | (1) Cerebral Hemorrhage (2) Cardiac Failure certified by E M Walker M.B. | Edgar William George Davis, son in law, present at the death 40 Lower Ebor Street, York | Registered Third March 1924 | R K Chapman, Registrar

Ann followed a little over a year later in 1925, suffering from chronic bronchitis and ultimately cardiac arrest, age 75, with her son James Albert Edgar in attendance.

70-11 Registration District YORK									
1925 DEATHS in the Sub-District of YORK WEST in the County of YORK C.B.									
No.	When and Where Died	Name of Deceased	Sex	Age	Date of Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Name, and Address of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
103	Thirtieth June 1925 6 Stafford Place Holgate Road (U.D.)	Ann Edgar	Female	75 Years	Railway Engine Fitter Retired	Chronic bronchitis & cardiac failure Certified by L. M. D. Mill -M.B.	J. A. Edgar Son In attendance Burns Hotel Market Street York	Second July 1925	R. K. Chapman Registrar

Transcription: Thirtieth June 1925, 6 Stafford Place, Holgate Road, UD | Ann Edgar | Female | 75 years | Widow of John Thomas Edgar, Railway Engine Fitter | (1) Chronic Bronchitis (2) Cardiac Failure certified by L. M. D. Mill M.B. | J A Edgar, son, In attendance , Burns Hotel, Market Street, York | Registered Second July 1925 | R K Chapman, Registrar

**A**delaide Edgar was the tenth of twelve children, born 2 August 1888, in the family's Price Street tenement but raised at No. 3 Rosary Terrace where the family moved in the mid 1890s. The 2up/2down terraced home overlooked the railway tracks and engine sheds where her father worked.

Superintendent Registrar's District: <i>York</i>										
Registrar's Sub-District: <i>Tricklegate</i>										
1888 BIRTHS in the Sub-District of <i>Tricklegate, in the County of York</i>										
No.	Where and When Born.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.	The Date of Birth (to be filled after Registration of Birth).	
370	<i>Second August 1888 Harriss Buildings Price Street St Mary Bishophill Junior York</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>John Thomas Edgar</i>	<i>Ann Edgar formerly Lumsdon</i>	<i>Railway Engine Fitter</i>	<i>Ann Edgar Mother Price Street York</i>	<i>Thirteenth September 1888</i>	<i>Ben Chapman</i>	<i>Registrar</i>	

Transcription: Second August 1888, Harriss Buildings, Price Street, St Mary Bishophill Junior, York, USD | Name: Adelaide | Sex: Girl | Father: John Thomas Edgar | Mother: Ann Edgar formerly Lumsdon | Profession of father: Railway Engine Fitter | Informant: Ann Edgar, Mother, Price Street, York | Registered Thirteenth September 1888 | Ben Chapman, Registrar

Age 12, Adelaide was living with her parents and six siblings, who were working as a grocer's assistant, draper, confectionary sweet packer, and wood letter die cutter. During her early teenage years, two of her siblings died – only eight of the twelve siblings survived to adulthood.

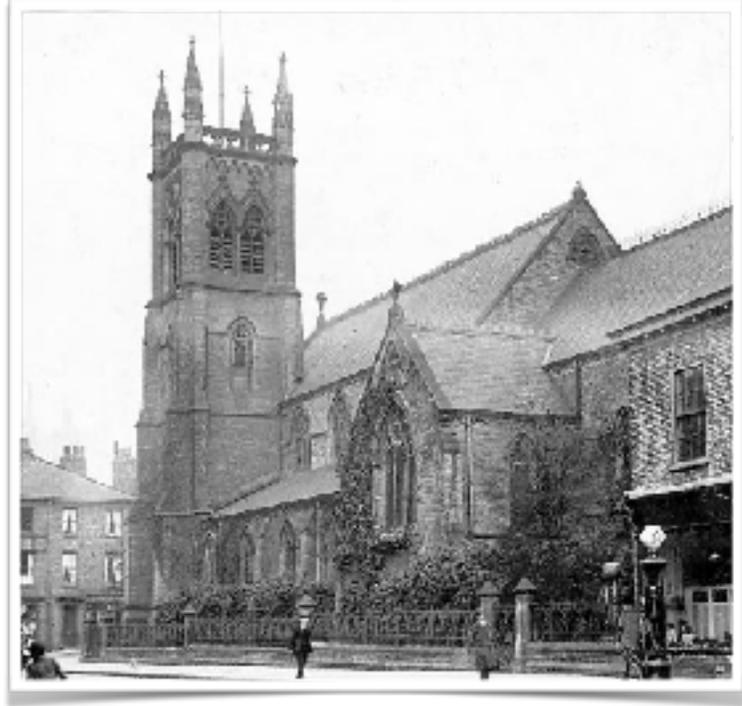
Infant mortality was more than 40 percent higher in the poorest than in the most well-to-do districts. Seebohm Rowntree's survey of working class households in York in 1899, identified large families as one of the main sources of poverty, and thus an even larger proportion of children than adults were living below the poverty line. The emphasis was placed firmly on environmental factors and nutrition. The most important

environmental factors predisposing to disease and disability were overcrowding, sanitary conditions, and air pollution. However primacy was given to the amount and quality of food available to children, especially at the younger ages.



Stafford Place, Eagle Street and Rosary Terrace in about 1960 before they were demolished. The main street visible in the picture is Lowther Terrace off Holgate Road. Eagle Street is the street with the off-licence on its corner (with the magnet sign). Rosary Terrace is the last row of houses in the distance.

The 24 year old spinster, Adelaide Edgar, married 21 year old bachelor, John Henry Bainbridge, at St Maurice Parish Church in York, 9 April 1913. The couple most likely met whilst Adelaide was working as a tailoress and John Henry as an apprentice clothier at a clothing and outfitting store in York.



St Maurice Parish Church, Monkgate, York.  
The building was removed in the 1960s and  
the churchyard is now a public green space.

The newly weds settled in the village of Newton on Ouse, 9 miles northwest of York, where John Henry ran a grocery shop on Moor Lane, the main street entering the village, opposite the school.

Their first child was conceived before the outbreak of the first World War but, by the time Charles Reginald Bainbridge was born, 28 January 1915, the expectations of a short war had evaporated.

Two of Adelaide's siblings served during World War I. Her elder sister, Maude, served as a Nurse with Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service and her younger brother, James, served with the King's Royal Rifle Corps in France. Both returned home to their families.



Royal Army Medical Corp, Training Company,  
Blackpool, Lancashire, Postcard circa 1916.

Initially deployed in April 1917 with the Royal Army Medical Corp, John Henry received training in Blackpool and was stationed in Roughton, Norfolk, with the 325th Ambulance Company (Home Service).



Royal Army Medical Corp  
Cap Badge, circa 1916

In the spring of 1918, John Henry was transferred to the 505th Agricultural Corp in Nottinghamshire. Shortly thereafter he was re-classified as B1 which deemed him fit for service abroad in a support capacity. Fortunately, so late in the war, John Henry was not called up for duties abroad and remained in the Agricultural Corp until demobilization in February 1919.

According to her daughter Doreen, Adelaide had continued running the shop during John Henry's service, and delivered groceries around the village on her bicycle. Four more children followed through the 1920's and the family remained in Newton on Ouse.

Prior to the outbreak of WWII the family were living on Cherry Tree Avenue, John Henry had sold the grocery store on Moor Lane to a corporation but the business failed and the family lost everything. John Henry took a job as Assistant Station Warden at RAF Station Linton to support Adelaide and their two youngest school-age children, Donald 13 & Doreen 11.



Adelaide Bainbridge, circa 1930, age 42



Cherry Tree Avenue, Newton on Ouse, Yorkshire. Photo credit: Geograph.org.uk



John Henry Bainbridge, circa 1938

However, once more in the Onions family, tragedy struck as John Henry suffered heart failure in Newton on Ouse and died age 48, 1 July 1940, leaving Adelaide widowed.

The stress from the loss of the grocery store was a likely contributing factor to his premature demise. John Henry was buried in Newton on Ouse Parish Churchyard where his daughter, Doreen, added a gravestone in 2010. The family did not have the finances to purchase a grave marker.

Registration District BULMER.								
1940. DEATHS in the Sub-District of EASINGWOLD in the County of YORK (N.R.)								
No.	Name and Nature of Dist.	Christian Name	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Designation, and Qualification of Registrar.	Date Registered.
119	Newton-on-Ouse (RD)	John Henry Bainbridge	Male	48 years	Storekeeper's Clerk	1(a) Coronary Thrombosis & Myocarditis Certified by A. K. Thomas M.B.	C R Bainbridge Esq. 10, College Street York	First July 1940
								N. J. Fielder Registrar

Transcription: First July 1940, Newton-on-Ouse RD | John Henry Bainbridge | Male | 48 years | Storekeeper's Clerk | 1(a) Coronary Thrombosis (II) Myocarditis certified by A.K. Thomas M.B. | C R Bainbridge, 10 College Street, York | Registered First July 1940 | N. J. Fielder, Registrar

Adelaide remarried in the fall of 1941. Her second husband, Frank Hudson, also worked at RAF Station Linton, and was lodging with the family. The couple moved next door to her son, Donald, and his family on Prospect Terrace until "Mr Hudson," as he was affectionately known, passed away in 1969, aged 79.

Michael Bainbridge, Adelaide's grandson, recalls visiting his grandmother's semi-detached bungalow on Back Lane in Newton on Ouse where 'children should be seen but not heard.' Adelaide's final years were spent in Haxby. She outlived all her siblings, finally passing away aged 86, in York, 1 July 1975.



Adelaide Hudson, age 83, 1971

## The Onions

The DNA results from our family have confirmed that we are related to Martha Edgerton Onions (1822-1890) but not to any ancestors of John Edgar (1823-1853). It will take a great deal more research to determine who is the father of John Thomas Onions (1842-1924). However we can confirm that our family are Onions, not Edgar.

Four generations of Onions family, over the course of 150 years, were intertwined with the industrial revolution and the resulting risks of life in the urban slums and tenements. Adelaide was the first our family line to return to a more agrarian village lifestyle. That decision is likely to have reduced the risk of infant mortality for her children, which had plagued her siblings, born in both Tyneside and York.

The origins of the Black Country family is quite concentrated despite their origins in Staffordshire, Shropshire, & Worcestershire. The county's borders have shifted over time and our family lived in those border areas so their county of birth may no longer align with the current map. However the origin of the Onions family line is most likely Welsh.

Googling the Onions family name will return something similar to the following, which must be taken with a pinch of salt:

*Brythonic in origin, the name of Onions came from the rugged landscape of Wales. The name is from the common Welsh personal name Enion. The Old Welsh form of this name was Enniaun, which is ultimately derived from the Latin name Annianus. The name is also associated with the Welsh word "enion," which literally means "anvil" and connotes the qualities of stability and fortitude. Some experts also associate the surname Onions with the Welsh word "uniawn," which means "upright" or "just."*

If you have any photographs, documents, or personal stories about the family, I would be delighted to include them in this, or future, family histories. Thank you.

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